

MCCC NEWS

Mid-Cities Commodore Club, Inc.

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Amiga Magazines by Rick Schulz



There are several publications now available which cover the latest news, software and hardware for the Amiga. Several are good and some are not so good.

First the bad news: Commodore publishes two magazines, **Commodore Microcomputers** and **Commodore Power/Play**, which cover all manner of Commodore products. What makes these publications so disappointing is the limited coverage on the Amiga. Both carry a section titled "Free Amiga's Buyers Guide." Contained therein are a few articles and a lot of advertising, which is not something I would consider spending money for. While I appreciate the need to advertise, I would expect better coverage from Commodore on their new rising star. But such is not the case.

The magazines do strive to cover many aspects of the Commodore computers, but the Amiga coverage is slight. If you own more than one Commodore computer, then you may wish to consider one or both of these magazines. Commodore has announced that these two publications will be combined into one magazine next year, and, perhaps their coverage of the Amiga will improve.

Info is also dedicated to "Commodore computing" but unlike Commodore's own publications, it gives equal time to the Amiga. This is a slick, well-organized publication, covering the latest news/rumors, new hardware/software, and, surprisingly, provided (in at least one issue) a list of the best Commodore-related articles from other magazines - something unique, refreshing and informative! The magazine is divided into sections, each dedicated to a Commodore machine, and this makes it easy for those who are only interested in one particular machine. **Info** would have been the best of the lot, failing only in the following way: the magazine's price is a bit steep (\$3.60 an issue) and is only published bi-monthly. I read rather rapidly, and two months is a long time to wait for something this good. All that aside, this is a very good publication.

Amazing Computing is also dedicated entirely to the Amiga, and does a fine job of presenting reviews of new hardware and software, trade shows coverage, tutorials on a variety of subjects (Microsoft Basic, for example), and interviews with people are who contributing to the Amiga in one form or another. The magazine lacks the

color photos and professional layouts found in other magazines, tends to carry a lot of advertising (39 ads in 64 pages), and is really rather short. But what it lacks in gloss, it more than makes up for in content. The articles are well written and the explanations/reviews of software are accompanied by examples. It is well worth the \$2.50 per issue.

Amiga World avoids the criticism of **Amazing Computing**. The magazine is both informative as well as professional

looking. The first few issues were somewhat weak in content, but this has improved as their experience with the Amiga grows. Unfortunately, this magazine is published only bi-monthly and commands \$3.60 per issue at the newsstand.

In terms of informative content, the very best publication available is **The Amigan - Apprentice and Journeyman**. There are no photos, no slick paper, and no advertising. Only information on how to make better use of your Amiga. This journal is well organized, well written and contains articles of interest to both first day beginners and seasoned professionals. The editors call it a reference journal, beginning with the fundamentals and working up. Both back issues and an index are available. Since they accept no advertising, their reviews tend to be more objective than those found in other magazines. (It is a fact of the publishing world that advertising, not circulation, pays the bills, including salaries.) You will not always agree with their opinions, but you cannot doubt their honesty. Unlike the other publications, **The Amigan** cannot be purchased at the newstand, but is available only to members; membership is \$24.00 a year. The journal is published bi-monthly, so this places it in the expensive category, but here you get what you pay for. If interested, send a check or money order to The Amigans, P.O. Box 411, Hatteras, N.C. 27943.

No doubt there are other magazines now on the newstand which cover the Amiga and related products. These were not deliberately excluded; rather, I tried to select the magazines found in most bookstores and magazine racks. I deviated from this criteria to include **The Amigan** because it is the best buy for the money.

Programmer's Corner

by Bob Lawson

The following excerpt of a letter I received last month may be interesting to a few of you readers:

I enjoy reading your rendition each month in the MCCC Newsletter...however Imust point out.....your program listing in line 104.....read(s)...a number from the GET statement and then test(s) it in the conditional IF statement as a string. I feel sure you knew better than that and have already detected the TYPE MISMATCH ERROR.

To the unknown author of this letter, change the quotation marks in line 104 to a zero and the routine will work perfectly. At four o'clock in the morning, with a NL deadline staring you in the face the same day, proofreading can get a bit sloppy. My apologies for the inconvenience.

The really disturbing thing to me was a conversation I had with a friend of mine concerning another serious blunder in the same article. His reply was to not worry about it since no one reads these articles anyway. I have to disagree with him. Articles such as these and others printed in the newsletter can be very valuable to the novice programmer. And I, as well as the other authors, have an obligation to provide you the readers the very best we have to offer.

Last month I presented a rather shoddy routine to illustrate how the GET statement can be used in conjunction with the keyboard buffer. Again, at four o'clock in the morning, I have a tendency to lapse into terminal dumbness. As I stated, the GET statement halts program execution and reads each keypress typed by the user. Going one step further, these keypresses can be stored in the keyboard buffer and acted on by the GET statement in conjunction with the conditional IF statement. Here's the correct routine:

```
10 PRINT"THE TEST PHRASE IS 'GET TESTER'15
PRINT"YOU HAVE 10 SEC TO TYPE THE CORRECT
KEYS"
20 A=TI
25 IFTI-A$600THEN25
30 B=1
35 READB$(B)
40 IFB$(B)="0"THENPRINTCHR$(13)"YOU
ARE RIGHT":GOTO70
45 GETA$
50 IFB$(B)$A$THENPRINTCHR$(13)
"INCORRECT": GOTO65
55 PRINTA$;
60 K=K+1:IFK$12THEN35
65 PRINTA$
70 END
100 DATA"G","E","T"," ", "T","E","S",
"T","E","R","O"
```

This short routine produces some rather surprising results. First of all, lines 20 and 25 start a timing routine inside the computer which still allows you to input data via the keyboard. Line 30 is a

delimiter parameter to tell the read statement how many DATA entries to read before continuing the program. Since the whole idea of a routine of this sort is to force the user to respond a certain way, and, since the GET statement only reads one keypress at a time before continuing with the program, a delimiter of 1 is necessary to force a comparison and allow program execution. Line 45 GETs your keypress. Since a timing delay was initiated the GET statement will get the first character you typed which is now stored in the keyboard buffer. Remember, the keyboard buffer holds ten characters only. Lines 40 and 50 compare the user input with the expected input. If there's a match, line 55 executes and line 60 loops the program for the next comparison. When all the conditions are met, line 70 ends the program. If the conditions are not met, the program will print each character sequentially that was correct, print the error message underneath the correct responses, print the incorrect response which caused the error message, halt the program and print the word READY on the screen, and finally, DUMP the remainder of the keyboard buffer below the ready message. If all this sounds confusing, RUN the program several times inputting correct and incorrect responses.

There is one other point I would like to make about last month's article. I have stated several times in previous articles that there are numerous ways to program and achieve results that are similar. Our mystery writer suggested using a routine which tests the variable and executes a GOTO with the use of the ON statement. I had intended to use this feature in a later article, but, since the issue was made, let's discuss it now.

Several factors can slow a program down to a crawl, the biggest of which is the testing done by the computer. Using FOR/NEXT loops where the variable is tested (as in NEXTA) is considerably slower than using the simple NEXT. IF/THEN tests for conditions to be met. If a correct condition is met, then execute. If a correct condition is not met, continue testing until that condition is met and then execute. Using test phrases such as those above in game programs where speed is important to move sprites around the screen or where music or sound effects are important would be impractical and prohibitive for good results. Using conditional statements in your program where you intend to stop the program to get user responses is permissible and provides a much clearer view of what's taking place. This is important if you are just learning how to program.

As you progress you will find that you can shorten your source code to preserve memory and you can assign program variables in other ways:

```
100 PRINTCHR$(147)"ENTER SELECTION"
101 PRINTTAB(5)"1 - TEST1"
102 PRINTTAB(5)"2 - TEST2"
103 PRINTTAB(5)"3 - TEST3"
104 GETA$:A=VAL(A$)
```

```

105 ONAGOTO200,300,400:GOTO104
200 PRINT"THIS IS TEST1":GOTO104
300 PRINT"THIS IS TEST2":GOTO104
400 PRINT"THIS IS TEST3":GOTO104

```

Since the program was halted to allow user response, there is no noticeable speedup in program execution. The source code has been shortened, however, thus conserving memory. This is referred to as COMPUTED EXECUTION. The following is a few rules to follow if you intend to use this feature:

- 1 To prevent a SYNTAX error use GET with the string symbol (GETA\$)
- 2 Convert the string A\$ into a numeric value - ..A=VAL(A\$)...
- 3 Remember that the ON statement consists of the command ON, a numeric value, the keyword GOTO or GOSUB, a list of line numbers, and a default statement (see line 105 above).
- 4 When executed, the ON statement tests the numeric value, counts that far into the list of line numbers and then performs a GOTO or GOSUB to that line.
- 5 If the numeric value exceeds the number of line numbers in the list, the statement will be ignored and the program continues with the default statement.
- 6 There are no restrictions on the line numbers in the list, the line numbers do not need to be in increasing order, and the same line number may be used more than once in the same list.
- 7 If consecutive commas are used in place of line numbers then program execution jumps to line 0.
- 8 Finally, if a line number is used in the list which does not correspond with a line number in the program an UNDEF'D STATEMENT error will be generated causing a program crash.



I got a little sidetracked from this month's article on DIM statements but felt obligated to provide you with necessary program corrections and an alternative method of using conditional statements. This article is already quite lengthy so I must postpone the discussion on DIM statements until a later date, perhaps December. Articles for October and November have already been written and are really more logical in the overall scheme of things since they deal with alternative methods of displaying data on the screen. Stay with me. We've barely scratched the surface of programming. There's still a wealth of knowledge to be learned. Hope you found this month's article as entertaining and informative as previous articles. Until next month, HAPPY PROGRAMMING.

New Library Disks

by Don Laingor

Disk # 292

This disk contains two SIDPLAYERS and a group of songs to play. LOAD either "AUTO SID CON" or "MAGIC SID PLAYER" and RUN. Some very nice music.

Disk # 293:

The title of this one is **Memory Window** by Scott Lamb of Ft. Worth. A fine scrolling character set graphic utility and tutorial that creates a window into the memory of the C-64. This is a "shareware" program; with a donation to the author you will receive complete documentation.

Disk # 294 & 295:

These two disks contain Doodle! Readers and a collection of pictures created by the DOODLE! program. Some are in black and white and some in color. Among the authors are C. A. Blair and Barbara Cramer.

Correction: Disk # 707, reported in last month's issue, is a collection of utility programs for the C128 collected by Billy Godfrey from various sources.



World Geography

Review by Sheree Lynch/SFVCUG

If you are looking for a fun way to study geography, here it is! World Geography is like a game and text book in one. It extremely easy to use. It loads in less than 50 seconds (with no head knocking!) and you select off the menu with just a flick of the joystick.

The program gives you a wide selection to choose from. With features from 175 different countries. You select from 3 geographical areas, America and Pacific, Eurasia, Africa or all of the above. You may also select a difficulty level. It gives you a choice of studying with a friend or alone.

The graphics are sensational. They show you a spinning globe with life like drawings of all the continents. The country appears on the screen with it's flag. You are asked general questions about it, such as what is the capital and the language. If you get better at it you get bonus questions. Here you have to say which flag goes with which country. At the end the person with the most points wins. You can play this program for hours without getting bored. There is always something new to learn. If you've been looking for this kind of program, here is how to order. Call Bobco software at (405)462-1551 or send a check or money order, for \$26.95 including shipping, to 200 Seventh ave., Suite 111 Santa Cruz, CA 95062.

ON-LINE

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More on BOSTON-CITINET: Let's continue our tour of BOSTON-CITINET, a "free" local service by Applied Videotex Systems of Belmont, MA; their modem link is 617-489-4930.

The Town Crier segment of BOSTON-CITINET is a real delight; enter CRIER at the main menu prompt. Town Crier covers weather, lottery info, system bulletins and news, and an entertaining arena of jokes, palindromes and an on-line novel. A 9-item sub-menu has options for "Joke de Jour & Silly Jokes", the writers' nook, and the Boston teen-scene. A fan of good humor, I opted for the jokes entry. The screen that followed welcomed my own contributions to the gag inventory, but cautioned that dirty jokes, while appreciated, can't be published (sorry).

Next came a sub-menu grouping funnies by Joke du Jour, insurance claims, light bulb jokes, dumb jokes, Q&A jokes, T&A jokes, paragraph jokes, legal laughs, glossary of terms, and oxymorons/palindromes. I sampled a few, including the Joke du Jour, and found an assortment of gags (e.g., What's a happy Roman? Ans.: a gladiator). The light bulb genre went like this one: How many Martians does it take to change a light bulb? Ans.: one and one-half. Yes, I did try the T&A group but the joke was on me; a single line teased, "What did you think would be here?". On a more intellectual level are oxymorons and palindromes. An oxymoron is an expression joining two seemingly contradictory concepts: jumbo shrimp, clear as mud, luxury bus. A palindrome is a phrase spelled the same way forward or backward: "Lew Otto has a hot towel." If you don't dig this stuff, you might "dig" news on urban gardening. CRIER offers Flora's forum and questions to Flora, by the Fenway Garden Society, helping you get the most from your victory garden, rooftop bucket or window box.

Main menu option SHOP ports you to the Electronic Shopping Mall. After a few brief ads, a sub-menu features at-home shopping, audio/visual goods, business services, classifieds, magazines and books, a computer mall, auto rentals/leasing, and satellite dishes. Posted were notices about future charges, and a rule that classifieds are for individuals, not retailers. Another sub-menu asked if I wished to browse listings, list categories, place or cancel an ad, or if I needed browsing instructions. I opted to list categories and was presented with a roster of 19 fields, from auto parts and accessories, to sporting goods. Further browsing in the computer category uncovered 15 ads, as old as 2 months. Each ad held a number, date, name and contact phone, and item description.

For a look at retail SHOPPING, I zipped back to the first SHOP sub-menu and tried the at-home shopping entry. A two-item

sub-menu let me select in-home buying, which displayed another four-option slate. Here you can seek bargains for home alarm systems, water treatment systems, or health and fitness goods. Each ad describes the product or service, and ends with a prompt asking if you want more info.

One of the most informative system features is the On-Line Guide to Boston, accessed by typing BOSTON at the main menu. This part covers places and events in the self-proclaimed "hub of the universe". The Greater Boston Convention Tourist Bureau (who else?) sponsors the deal. A wonderful 9-item sub-menu entices you with news on conventions, the Boston Gourmet, movies, the music and club scene, events, weather, museums, and hotels. Elect the weather report, updated twice daily, and you'll be treated to the 48-hour forecast, plus the scoop on high tides and water temperatures, courtesy of a local TV weatherman. The events pick looked promising, so I keyed it and saw yet another sub-menu, a 16 item roster of topics, including comedy clubs, concerts, music, free (happenings), sports, photography and theater. Naturally, I went straight for the free stuff. What followed were facts for five upcoming events. Each blurb included a number, date, description (e.g., Ansel Adams Photographs), place, cost (free), times, and a phone number for tickets and more information--complete yet concise.

Out of curiosity, I went back to the Boston sub-menu and sampled the entry for hotel listings. A brief sub-menu requested that I narrow my hunt to Boston hotels or those in greater Boston and beyond. The information that followed, however, was not aimed at individuals (nothing on room rates, hotel amenities, etc), but rather at conventions. Each display identified the hotel, its address, a phone contact, and the seating capacity of the inn's largest banquet room.

On a more sobering note is main menu option GOV, for government. Sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, this segment is aptly dubbed "On-Line Democracy". A sub-menu addresses the League itself, statewide news, a public opinion forum, Boston-Citinet editorials, and government documents. I chose documents and faced a patriotic choice between The Constitution and The Declaration of Independence. The full text of your selected manuscript will scroll across your screen, so be sure to open your buffer if you want a reprint.

Boston-Citinet does have its drawbacks. As you can tell from this review, I found the depth of sub-menus to be annoying. In most cases it took me quite a long time to finally arrive at the information itself. I expect, though, that with practice, users can shift into the expert mode and exploit some short cuts. Although Boston-Citinet is supposed to be free, charges are creeping in: \$25/year for CB, \$25/year for an electronic mailbox, and REALNET ads at \$10/line/month. The tariffs are minimal, however, and if held down should not deter new callers. I saw no hint of a formal

users' manual, but help screens fill the bill well enough. The REALNET section was too limited and outdated to be of great value to serious house hunters; cooperation from brokers can overcome this. Furthermore, the log off is abrupt: no polite thank-you's or connect-time summaries common to even rudimentary local boards.

On the plus side, the system is easy to use, informative, entertaining and cheap. I especially enjoyed the On-Line Guide to Boston and the jokes. On balance, I applaud Applied Videotex Systems for their bold, innovative approach; local service, ad-based revenues, involvement of community groups (like the tourist bureau, public TV station, garden society, and League of Women Voters), along with minimal charges, make a winning formula. I wish them luck and hope they will establish similar services in other cities. For a peek at what videotex should be, go on-line with BOSTON-CITINET.

Is the C64 a Real Artist's Tool?

by Jerry Mulinex

Reprinted from COD, C64 West Users Group, Santa Monica, CA

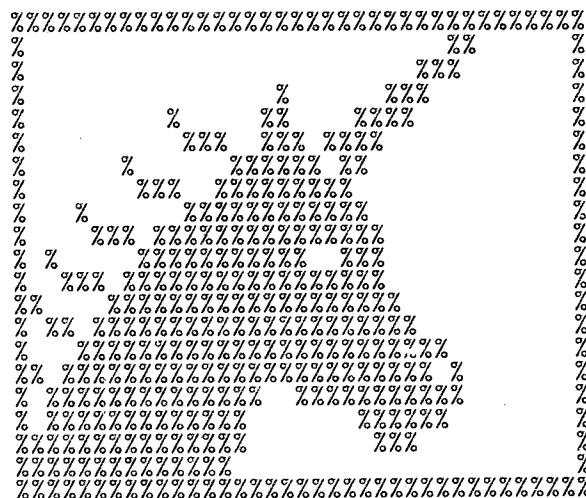
The C64 has been under the limelight lately. What is all this fuss? It has to do with its capabilities as an artist's tool. Is it able to enhance the expression of an artist, or does its 16 colors and endless cryptic code, pose a limitation to the artist? Could the same or maybe even better work be accomplished with a few simple tools like pencils, paper, crayons? How does the computer compare to the traditional tools of an artist?

Any tool has its strong points and its weak ones. The computer is no different. Each tool has a personality of its own. The computer is no different. While it may not be the best or the worst tool available, it does offer some very unique possibilities of expression. For example; where could you find any other medium that allows you to create a painting, add movement, and instrumentation all at once. There are not many mediums that will allow you to do all that at once. The computer also allows you to add words to your work which give the expression more versatility.

Of course, the technology is not fully developed, but we can still take advantage of some great possibilities today! It is not necessary that one be a programmer to take advantage of the computer graphics. There are, for instance, graphics utilities that do for the visual artist what a word-processor does for the writer. These graphics programs can be operated through many means: light pens, graphics tablets, joysticks, or keyboard input. The advantages may not be obvious, but nevertheless they are there. Speed, flexibility, and immediacy are probably the greatest features that computer graphics offer. The ability to edit with a graphics

processor is an amazing capability that other forms of art just do not have. This lends itself to experimentation. This is an area that one need not fear since the computer is a natural for "OOPSING" anything not wanted. Of course you could save your work at any stage allowing you the freedom to do this experimentation. Is there a better way to be creative? I can't think of many.

Up to this point, computer graphics have been related only to games. It seems only natural that computer art will become as commonly talked about as game graphics, once everyone discovers what can be done. The computer will be placing itself in front of many, many people in the coming years. Many if not all will be getting a taste of a new type of art. Maybe they will be looking at something that you have done. If so, they will be seeing it just the way you created it.



Random Thoughts

by Louis Nordlinger

C-64 West Users Group, Santa Monica, CA

For users of Paperclip: If you have ever wished you could print an alphabetized listing of the directory, you can. It can be accomplished as follows.

1. Load directory.
2. Tap [CTRL]. You should get, "Control Option?" at the top of the monitor.
3. Tap [3]
4. Tap [*]
5. Follow PAPERCLIP directions for "Setting A Column". See manual index.
6. Follow PAPERCLIP directions for "Sorting A Column". See manual index.
7. Follow PAPERCLIP directions for "Direct Output". See manual index.

Be sure all unwanted data is erased before going through the above procedure

Perfect Writer 128

Review by Laura Clements

CP/M can be an enigma to the new user. Drives become A: and B: and a "Virtual E:". The cursor flies all over the screen, seemingly looking for something and never finding it. I played with CP/M until I bought a genealogy program from Salt Lake City, Utah; then I recognized the system's strength. Now I understand why it has endured in the computer world since 1978.

Perfect Writer 128 with Perfect Speller and Perfect Thesaurus is a magnificent professional level CP/M wordprocessor especially installed for the Cl28. It bills itself as "the only word processing program you will ever need". It could well be right.

Perfect Writer will automatically create a table of contents or an alphabetized index complete with page numbers utilizing tagged text. Footnotes will automatically be placed at the bottom of the page, at the end of the document, or within the body of the text itself, and will be sequentially numbered.

The screen is in a "typewriter" layout, so what you type is what you print. Margins, headings, and paragraphs are also automatically formatted, and different fonts are also viewed on the screen. Also supported is a full search and replace capability. For the more advanced user, there are resident document style options for document formatting.

Also, split-screen editing lets one window be used to organize notes, and the other one be used for writing. Pop-up on-screen menus make it simple to find the correct program functions.

Perfect Speller is dictionary consisting of 50,000 words that works fairly fast, and can be expanded. Perfect Thesaurus will aide the writer's vocabulary.

Perfect Writer is written in "C", a language known for its speed and stability. An advanced software engineering design feature, called virtual memory architecture, swiftly and automatically transfers portions of core memory to and from disk storage. This swapping allows processing of text files much larger than the Cl28's internal memory would normally allow. Perfect Writer can handle up to seven documents simultaneously.

Included with the program is a "Lessons" disk that teaches how to use the wordprocessor. It runs through the editing portion of the program, and is invaluable to the new user. The User's Manual is exceptionally well done, and needs to be kept near at all times! This is not a program that can be loaded and used immediately.

Also available, somewhere, but not locally, is Perfect Calc and Perfect Filer. If they are of the same quality as Perfect Writer, this trio of programs could easily run a small business or meet a family's household requirements.

Graphics Expander

Springboard Software

Review by Barbara Cramer

Springboard Software has taken many of the smaller drawings formerly included in their NEWSROOM software and translated them for use with the popular Print Shop series of programs. Graphics Expander includes these cartoon-like drawings as well as an editor to modify them to your liking. In addition, a picture from Print Shop may be loaded in and mixed with the repertoire of drawings from the Graphics Expander.

This program is not just another library disk of additional pictures. In fact, you must use the GE Editor to transform the picture files into useable Print Shop files. The advantage to this arrangement is that you can use the various elements of a picture to create exactly what you want. For example, you may create a face by selecting the eyes, nose, mouth and expressions that suit your needs. Then you will save the finished product as a file that can be used in Print Shop. The disadvantage is the time it will take to assemble and move files from one disk/format to the other whether you make changes or not.

Since the editors in both the Graphics Expander and the Print Shop Companion are similar, I have created the following chart to compare features.

Springboard had an excellent idea in offering the Newsroom graphics for use with Print Shop, however, I wish they had more simply offered a library disk. You will notice from the chart that the Print Shop Companion offers more features with the exception of font types and zoom features. The Companion also gives you a Font and Border Editor, Calendar Maker, Creature Maker and Tile Magic for the same retail price.

If you own ICON FACTORY you can make your own conversions from Newsroom to Print Shop although it will take much longer than using the Graphics Expander. The program is probably best suited to children who enjoy creating their own pictures from the various elements offered. It has been my experience that most children possess the additional time and patience that I lack.

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Memory		
Overlay graphics	YES	YES
EDITING FEATURES -----		
Lines, rays, circles and boxes	YES	YES
Draw-Erase Mode	Must be selected	Automatic
Pen Styles	10	1
Fill Patterns	10	17
Font Types	3 Large 2 Small	1
Horizontal Flip	YES	YES
Vertical Flip	NO	YES
Magnify small section for close-up work	YES	NO
Oops-Undo last action	YES	YES
Move drawing up/down/right/left	Original only-not changes	Scrolls Entire Screen
Display as tile pattern	NO	YES
Mirror draw-Vertical Horizontal or both	NO	YES
Insert/Delete any Row or Column	NO	YES
Negative Image	NO	YES

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Star Printer NL10

by M.W. Hallock

Commodore User Group of Arizona

The NL-10 is a 120 character per second printer in the general class of the SG-10 and NX-10. It offers 30 characters per second in Near Letter Quality (NLQ) mode.

Basically it is exactly like the NX-10 using the same basic mechanism. A push style tractor and single sheet feeder are standard, just like the NX-10. A front panel with a large variety of controls is present. Two self-tests, panel lock mode (especially important is your software keeps changing the settings you want on the panel) and HEX dump may be selected easily at power on. When the printer is off-line, you can quickly set left and right margins, print pitches and styles, top of form position and feed the paper forward or reverse in 1/216" steps.

The NL-10 features a cut-sheet guide which doubles as a paper guide in tractor mode - so you don't have two separate pieces to store (or lose) and a column ruler on the paper bail. It uses a common N-Series cartridge ribbon which is so easy to change that your fingers stay clean.

While other N-Series printers do a very good job addressing the compatability issue, the NL-10 really excels here. This printer comes standard without an interface or firmware. Instead there is a slot in the back of the printer which accepts an easily installed cartridge carrying the printer firmware and the interface hardware. Available cartridges include Escape-P standard parallel, IBM parallel and a Commodore compatible cartridge which plugs directly into the Commodore serial bus. An RS-232 serial cartridge and other special purpose interfaces are planned.

PROS and CONS

Only a few minuses for this printer. The major thing was the lack of density of the dot-matrix mode. In order to get a decent dot-matrix printout, I had to put the printer mode into BOLD. Every line had to be double printed. (The cartridge interface that was shipped with the printer was not the correct one. Perhaps when I receive the Epson interface, the dot matrix will improve.) Another dislike is the cartridge ribbon. I know that most professional printers have these cartridges, but I prefer the simplicity of the spool ribbons and I have the need to change colors every once in a while. Although the ribbon in the cartridge can be replaced very easily, it could be a mess if not handled properly.

On the plus side, it is quieter, much quieter than the SG-10. The NLQ is superb, much better than the SG-10 even if it is only a 9-pin print head. I can switch from 10 CPI to 17 CPI in a matter of seconds. I can go from normal to bold type at any

time. I can go to NLQ at any time also. A BIG PLUS: Star Micronics is one of few manufacturers that has a one year warranty on all models of their printers. This printer with all it's features retails for \$379.



Partyware

Review by Barbara Cramer

Another in the series of "ware" disks (Cardware, Heartware, etc.) Partyware gives you the option to print everything for a party from invitations to placemats. Documentation is not given in this menu-driven program. Creative skill is not needed either as your choices are limited.

Partyware provides a very nice database where you will enter up to 60 records of 13 fields each. Information about the guests will be stored here including nickname, address, phone, birthday, and the title and date of 2 "events". You are not told what the event category is or how it is used, if used at all. This section will print labels and allows you to select which guests in the database to invite.

Next, you will be ready to print a one page checklist of things to decide and arrange before the party.

Invitations may be sent in two forms, printed or on disk. Unlike the other "ware" products, the disk invitation is quite bare, lacking the animation, sound and creativity of its predecessors. Your four line message is displayed on a black screen with a border flashing 4 or 5 pattern changes; no music, no animation, limited color.

The printed invitation, on the other hand, gives you more choices. You may design three of the four of the card sides and include a short on-liner on the back of the card. Twenty graphics and borders are provided but do not expect the quality of high resolution in the printout. I found the lettering course and confusing compared to the other card-printing packages now available.

When it comes time to decorate you can print party hats, place cards, place mats, banners and prize ribbons on your very own black and white printer. All may be personalized with the guests' names although there is no choice of graphics and I still can't figure out how to cut and assemble the hats!

The instructions for 6 party games are also included and the program supports a variety of Gemini, Okidata and Commodore printers.

For \$14.95, Partyware is a good value. Computer fanatics will enjoy planning and decorating their next event with computer-generated party supplies. Everything's included except the napkins and cake!

AUTOEXEC

by Michael LaPaglia
Catalina Commodore Club

I use a IBM PC/AT at work and one of the nicest things in MS-DOS is the BATCH file. A batch file is a SEQ. file of commands that is read and executed by the computer. An AUTOEXEC batch file is a batch file that is executed at power-up or restart of the computer. For example, on my AT at work I have an AUTOEXEC.BAT file that does the following at power-up

- 1: Resets my graphics card.
- 2: Boots my ram disk.
- 3: Checks and reports on my hard disk.
- 4: Loads a customized desktop menu.

This is very nice because it saves me the trouble of having to do all of the above every morning.

Using info obtained from CIS I have devised a way of using BATCH files on the C-128. Before we get to the HOW of this article, let's look at WHY.

The 128 will autoboot a program when you power-up or restart the computer. Lets assume you want to have the autoboot program do the following.

- 1: Change screen and cursor colors.
- 2: Redefine the F1 key.
- 3: Display the directory of the disk.

Any one of you who is at all versed in BASIC could write a program to do this in about 20 minutes. The catch is that if you want to change anything in the program you have to rewrite the BASIC program. Not a big problem but a pain if you want to customize it for every disk you own! With a true BATCH file all you would have to do to customize the startup events would be to edit the file with a word processor or text editor. This make it very easy to make changes to your file.

The secret to the BATCH file is a one line BASIC program that is called by the autoboot sector whenever the C-128 is powered-up or restarted. This BASIC program is very simple. It starts by opening a sequential read file called AUTOEXEC.BAT. Then it does a SYS to the CHKIN kernal routine \$FFC6. This causes the computer to get information from the opened channel on the disk drive. The effect is very similar to the dynamic keyboard. The commands in the batch file are entered into the BASIC INPUT BUFFER and each time a return is entered the commands are executed. The following is an example of a batch file to perform The above stated autoboot program.

```
COLOR0,1:COLOR4,13:COLOR5,13
KEY1,"CATALOG ON U9"
DIRECTORY:SYS65484:CLOSE8
```

As you can see the file contains several BASIC commands some on the same line. Any of these commands would work in the direct mode. The file could be created with a word processor, a Terminal prg text editor, or a short BASIC program. The command SYS65484:close8 is used to properly close the channel to the drive. This is a call to the CHKOUT kernal

routine and then a close.

The one line BASIC program (called by the autoboot sector) is:

```
10 OPEN8,8,8,"AUTOEXEC.BAT":
   SLEEP2:SYS65478,0,8,0,0
```

That's all that is needed to open and execute the autoexec batch file!

Some simple rules to remember:

1: Always use a logical file # of 8.
2: Anytime you use the drive and want to continue with the batch file (as in a DIR in the middle of the commands) you must use the CHKIN sys on the same command line, ie. 'DIRECTORY:SYS65478,0,8,0,0'. This will let the batch file continue with the next command.

3: The CHKOUT sys and CLOSE8 must be included on the last command line of the file. Note: This can be left off if the last line is 'RUN'

4: Multiple commands can be issued on a single line provided that you place a colon between each command and you observe rule #2.

5: Any command line cannot exceed 160 characters in length including the return.

6: Use the program on the 1571 test/demo disk to create an autoboot sector that calls the one line BASIC program.

In closing I would like to give you two good uses of the AUTOEXEC.BAT file.

The first is for all of you who use the 1670 modem. Place the following line in your batch file to prevent the modem from answering the phone when the computer is on.

```
open2,2,2,chr$(6)+chr$(0):print#2,
"ATSO=0":close2:sys65478,0,8,0,0
```

The second is a customizing file that sets the colors the way you like them. Displays the directory of the disk. Changes the 1670 auto answer default to 4 rings and defines the function key F1 to restart the autoexec.bat file.

```
COLOR0,1:COLOR4,13:COLOR5,13
OPEN2,2,2,CHR$(6)+CHR$(0):PRINT#2,
"ATSO=4":CLOSE2:sys65478,0,8,0,0
KEY1,"BOOT"+CHR$(13)
DIRECTORY:SYS65484:CLOSE8
```

I have used this concept on my five year old's game disk. The AUTOEXEC file runs a games menu for him so that all he has to do is to turn the computer on. Give this some thought and I'm sure that you will find many uses for the concept of batch files.

MOVING?

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CHAPTER NEWS

HEB CHAPTER

In September Laura Clements and John Malmstrom gave some very comprehensive demonstrations of several programs including 'Sixth Sense', 'Fleet System 3', Sylvia Porter's Personal Finance Series', 'Flexfile 128', 'Partner', 'Superscript', and 'Pocket Writer 128'.

Our thanks to you, Laura and John, for an interesting program. You're a great team.-Nancy Sparks

ARLINGTON CHAPTER

The chapter would like to thank Dr. Sparr from Computer Science Engineering Dept. for his excellent presentation on robotics at the September meeting. At present only about 1000 engineers exist in this field with the qualifications to set up a complete robotics center. This is a new field and it is the key to our survival as an industrial nation.

The next meeting will be 9:00 AM October 11 at the Community Center. The program will be 'Get the Most Out of Your Printer' as presented by our own Bruce Umbreit.-Jonathan Riba

AMIGA CHAPTER

If you missed the August meeting, you really missed a lot! Our friend Peter Rafeiner of Intercomputing was on hand to announce that he will sell a 1 megabyte expansion board, carrying the 68010 chips and a clock powered by a small battery. The price is extremely affordable, \$349.00 installed, and the board can eventually be upgraded to 4 megabytes. If interested, call Peter at 988-3500.

Ned Kelly will assume the duties of chapter Librarian, and Rick Schulz is our new Secretary/Reporter. Look for more in this column from Ned; his first task is to put our chapter library into order and to establish a more effective method of copying disks for our members. Your co-operation in this will be greatly appreciated. Also, if you have any ideas or suggestions for topics to be covered in our newsletter, or bits of advice (tricks of the trade?) or problems which defy solution, please forward them to me and I will get something in print.

If there is sufficient interest, the chapter will pursue setting up classes in Amiga Basic, Amiga DOS and other related subjects. For those who don't mind paying, contact Scott Lamb regarding his classes on Amiga DOS and Intuition.

The chapter approved a motion to send \$15.00 to Raymond Brand, the author of ARC16. The chapter will, from time to time, make donations to those who produce useful software, and your suggestions are welcome.

The highlight of the evening was a surprise visit from Dale Luck, one of the original designers of the Amiga. Dale was in town for the Siggraph show at the Dallas Convention Center, and was kind enough to take time from his busy schedule to stop by and chat with us. Some points of interest

that Dale has passed on to us:

* The long awaited Sidecar should be out by the end of the year.

* The Beta 6 version of the Kickstart and Workbench is the last beta version, and should be released as 1.2 sometime soon.

* Due to the many false rumors, the term "Ranger" will not be applied to any of the future models of the Amiga.

* The mood at Commodore-Amiga is somewhat more optimistic following a major reorganization of the corporation. Look for more and better things from Commodore-Amiga.

Dale was very generous in presenting the chapter with the complete developer's kit - both manuals and software. A checkout procedure will be developed and announced at both the chapter meetings and in this publication.

As we go to press, the executive committee has scheduled a session on bulletin boards for the October meeting. Plan to be there.

As a reminder, our chapter meetings will begin at 7 p.m. The meeting will come to order at 7:30 and will conclude at 9 p.m.

The executive committee is now planning activities for October through December; if you have any ideas or suggestions, please contact a chapter officer. Even more important, attend the meetings!

Letter of Thanks

The following letter was received last month from the Center for Computer Assistance to the Disabled. This type of effort happens quite frequently among our officers and members, although it more often goes unrewarded. Here's one 'thank you' that we would like everyone to know about.

August 12, 1986

Dear MCCC Members,

C-CAD is totally dependent upon the generosity of organizations, individuals and companies for support, both in-kind and financial.

We want you to know how very much we appreciate the recent contribution of one of your members, **Mr. Bill Heath**, who donated some valuable computer equipment and software that will be promptly placed into the hands of one of our disabled clients. I would also like to mention the generosity of **Mr. Clem Countess** for his concern for a client that has needed some very personal and competent assistance with his computer. These two gentlemen are surely an asset to the MCCC and the community at large. Our longtime active C-CAD supporter, **Robert Sessions**, became the 'touchstone' that allowed us to be acquainted with you fine folks!

Cordially,

John S. Kishpaugh, Sr.
Executive Director, Acting

Club Information

The MID-CITIES COMMODORE CLUB is a non-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school and in business. Appropriate and legal use of all types of software is encouraged by this club.

The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines Ltd. or Commodore Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC and C64) are registered trademarks of Commodore Inc.

Our meetings are open to all. Yearly membership dues are \$20.00 and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC NEWS, the club newsletter, library copying privileges, attendance at any or all chapter and club meetings as well as participation in club-sponsored classes. Dues are paid on a calendar year basis and new members who join after March 31 of each year pay prorated dues for the months remaining.

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\$60.00 per full page ad, \$30.00 per half page ad, \$20.00 per quarter page ad and \$10.00 per business card. Non-members will pay commercial rates.

The deadline for submissions to the MCCC NEWS is the third Saturday of each month. PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY CAMERA-READY AD COPY. Make all checks payable to Mid-Cities Commodore Club and mail to MCCC NEWS, P.O. 1578, Bedford, TX 76021.

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MEETINGS

Oct. 7 Board Meeting, 10am
Western Hills Inn

Oct. 11 ARLINGTON CHAPTER, 9am
Arlington Community Center

FT. WORTH CHAPTER, 1:30pm
Gen. Dyn. Rec. Area, Room 2

GRAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER, 1:30pm
Grand Prairie Public Library

Oct. 16 AMIGA CHAPTER, 7pm
Arlington Community Center

Oct. 18 QUARTERLY MEETING, 1:30pm
Hurst Recreation Center

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Oct. 20 FT. WORTH NIGHT CHAPTER, 7pm
St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

Oct. 21 GRAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER, 6:30pm
Grand Prairie Public Library

Nov. 1 BOARD MEETING, 10am
Western Hills Inn

Nov. 8 ARLINGTON CHAPTER, 9am
Arlington Community Center

FT. WORTH CHAPTER, 1:30pm
Gen. Dyn. Rec. Area, Room 2

GRAND PRAIRIE CHAPTER, 1:30pm
Grand Prairie Public Library



OCTOBER MEETINGS

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4 BOARD MEETING 10:00 AM
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 ARLNGTN FT/WRTH GRAND PRAIRIE
12	13	14	15	16 AMIGA 7:00 PM	17	18 QTRLY MEETING 1:30 PM
19	20 FT/WRTH NIGHT 7:00 PM	21 GRAND PRAIRIE 6:30 PM	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Don't forget the
**Quarterly
Meeting**

October 18, 1:30pm
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